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A
FAITHFUL ACCOUNT
OF THE
RIOT IN VIENNA,
&c.

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REPORT
OF THE
COMMISSIONER
OF THE
LAND OFFICE
IN
THE
STATE OF
NEW YORK

P6

A
FAITHFUL ACCOUNT
OF THE
RIOT IN VIENNA,

The 13th of APRIL, 1798,

OCCASIONED BY THE
FRENCH AMBASSADOR'S
HOISTING IN THAT CITY
THE
NATIONAL FLAG OF FRANCE.

BY AN EYE WITNESS.

*Translated from the Original German, published at Vienna,
April 23d, 1798.*

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1798.

A
FAITHFUL ACCOUNT

OF THE
RIOT IN LONDON

The 13th of April 1792.

BY A MEMBER OF THE
FRENCH AMBASSADOR'S

RESIDENCE IN THAT CITY.

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NATIONAL LIBRARY OF FRANCE



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Translated from the original French by

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LONDON

Printed by W. Woodcock, at the Press of the

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A

FAITHFUL ACCOUNT,

&c.

THE loyalty and public spirit of the subjects of Austria opposed a powerful barrier to the armies of France, at the time they were approaching to the heart of the Hereditary States; produced the preliminary negotiations at Lœben, and thus laid the foundation of the treaty which was afterwards concluded at Campo Formio. The Emperor, trusting that the French Govern-

ment really entertained that anxious desire for peace, of which, by its assurances on all hands, it had been so solicitous to impress the conviction, believed that, in effectuating a peace for his own subjects, even at the expence of considerable sacrifices, he was paving the way for the restoration of general tranquility in Europe.

The conclusion of peace was, of course, to be followed by the establishment of diplomatic intercourse between the Governments. But no previous amicable arrangement had yet taken place, relative to those departures from received usage, which the French Ministers had insisted on at almost all the courts to which they had been sent, and which were probably to be demanded here; when the public of Vienna were surprized by the unexpected

unexpected arrival of General Bernadotte. This Ambassador, unpractised in the diplomatic business, accustomed only to war, found himself in the necessity of depending for almost every thing on his secretaries and aides-de-camp; who appeared as little satisfied with the military violence of his character, as he was with their presumptuous and arrogant conduct. He constrained himself, at least in the beginning, to assume a polite and obliging manner. But his suite by no means manifested the same disposition. It consisted of a troop of rude and inconsiderate young persons, who, without regard to the rights of nations and the bonds of society, ridiculed all that, in the eyes of other nations, is sacred and respectable; vilified every thing that differed from what they had

been accustomed to see in their own country; indulged in boastful language; and, in short, discovered no inclination to unite closer the ties of friendship between the two powers. Men of consideration and foresight soon perceived the tendency of such proceedings, and foreboded an unfortunate result. But the good nature of the inhabitants of Vienna bore with the arrogance of these young men, ascribing it to their age, and their want of experience and education. And the Emperor's Ministers, hoping for a remedy from time, and from the discernment of the French Government, passed over with indulgence many insolences, behaved towards the Embassy with forbearance and moderation, and treated it with complacency and condescension. It is impossible that that Govern-

ment could have been acquainted with the personal qualities of those whom it appointed to compose it's embassy here; otherwise it would never have fixed it's choice upon persons so little qualified to preserve and to confirm the good understanding between the two powers, and to acquire esteem for the nation to which they belonged.

But affairs did not remain long even in this situation. The conduct of the Ambassador became daily more encroaching, and the insolence of his suite more insupportable. They avoided, with marked aversion, all intercourse with persons of respectability, and confined their society to rejected fugitives, and to a few foreigners, who paid with ingratitude the country who had received them with hospitality and kindness.

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It appeared as if this embassy had formed the resolution, cost what it would, to divide the two powers. After that numberless pretensions and importunities had been, with prudent moderation, partly satisfied and partly declined, by the Emperor's Ministry, the Ambassador, and those about him, believed the moment at hand, in which they might either produce dissensions among the peaceable inhabitants of Vienna, or, in case they should fail of success, might gain a plausible pretext for quitting the place, and exciting fresh misunderstandings between the two governments.

The following historical relation will place in a clear point of view, this plan, and the means they had recourse to to execute it.

How little did they know the attachment and fidelity of the Austrian subjects to their
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beloved Sovereign! How greatly did they miscalculate, in expecting to repeat in Vienna those scenes of atrocity, which, unhappily, in other capitals had been prepared by emissaries, and executed by restless and hot-headed young men.

On the 12th and 13th of April, General Bernadotte drew from the bankers of this place, all the money for which he had credit. He declared to the director of the theatres, that he could not accept a box, which was offered him, in consequence of a desire he had expressed, some time before, because he intended soon to leave Vienna. He ordered a flag to be secretly made, and hurried the workmen, with the most anxious importunity, to have it ready by the 13th of April, in the afternoon; declaring, that otherwise it would be of no service

service to him. Had these workmen, agreeably to their duty, announced to the magistracy the order for this singular work, perhaps this attempt also would have remained fruitless. But every thing was carried on in the utmost stillness; and, accordingly, on the 13th of April, the public was surprised by an unexpected appearance.

In the evening, about seven o'clock, General Bernadotte hung out, from the balcony of his house, a three-coloured flag of liberty, four yards in length, extending far into the street.

Any person who has resided in capitals can easily form to himself an idea of the effect produced by so striking a phenomenon. Those who first observed it stopped, and gazed with astonishment at the unusual spectacle; neither the
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occasion nor the object of which they were able to divine.

But when the number of spectators increased, and had began to make inquiries relative to the cause of an appearance so novel and extraordinary in this country, a variety of opinions were immediately formed. Some considered it as a bloody flag, which announced war; others as an insult offered, in defiance of the Emperor, to the Austrian nation; and others as a signal for insurrection.

The people were confirmed in these conjectures, by a report which spread itself among them, that the words "LIBERTY," and "EQUALITY," were written in German characters upon the flag; a mistake which, on account of the approach of night, could not be immediately rectified.

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A numerous crowd of all classes had now assembled before the Ambassador's house, and, irritated by the offensive conduct of the servants, who remained at the gate, and by the insulting behaviour of those who appeared on the balcony, had begun to express aloud their displeasure. The Chief Director of the Police, and the Colonel of the town guard, informed of the occurrence, instantly hastened to the place, attended by several officers and members of the police, and employed all their eloquence to engage the multitude peaceably to withdraw. The respect universally borne to these two characters would probably have given effect to their endeavours, had not General Bernadotte, with furious air, grasping with one hand the handle of his sabre, and clinching the other, run to the gate, and by offen-

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five menaces and vulgar abuse, driven to extremity the rage of the people. According to the information, highly deserving of credit, of the Chief Director of the Police, and of several eye-witnesses, the General was in a situation, which appeared to have its origin in an indulgence little suited to the character of a man of any education, and least of all to that of a man of his rank.

The scene now assumed a more serious appearance. The increasing crowd began to be more vehement, and peremptorily to demand the removal of the flag. In vain was General Bernadotte intreated to withdraw it. In vain did the Colonel of the town guard, accompanied by an officer, proceed to the Ambassador's apartment, in order to induce him, for the sake of quelling the tumult, to order

order the offensive flag to be taken down. General Bernadotte received the Colonel with the most injurious menaces, and forgot all the respect which he owed to the character of this gentleman, and to the office which he filled. The officers of the Police sent for pickets of cavalry and infantry, which arrived with the greatest expedition, and prevented as much as possible the increase of the crowd; but were no longer able to clear the streets, where the people, more and more irritated by the insulting threats directed against them, began to assail with stones the windows of General Bernadotte's hotel. He had, in the mean while, shut the gate; but the efforts of the people continued, notwithstanding all the representations of the officers of the Police; and the Emperor, who respects the rights
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of nations, even when they are violated with regard to him, gave orders to the military department to march out the garrison, and to shut the town gates; and to the civil department, to take such measures as were best adapted for the speedy restoration of tranquility.

The French Ambassador, when he found himself reduced to this extremity, wrote a threatening letter to the Emperor's Minister for Foreign Affairs, in which he allowed himself to call the crowd, collected before his house, a licentious rabble, and demanded, in the middle of the night, instantaneous and peremptory satisfaction.

He received, in return, the verbal assurance that every exertion would be made to restore tranquility. To a second note he received

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the same assurance in a written answer: and Baron Degelman, destined to be his Imperial Majesty's Minister at Paris, penetrated, with difficulty and danger, to the Ambassador's apartment, and spent with him the greatest part of this turbulent night.

Whilst the different departments were occupied, in pursuing the requisite measures, for quelling the disturbance, one of the crowd climbed up to the balcony, and threw down the flag. This was partly burnt and partly torn, and what remained of it, accompanied by a crowd of people, was carried to the main-guard, where, to prevent further scenes, it was deposited by the commanding officer.

Now that the people had proceeded so far, it is not surprising, that, provoked to the utmost, as they were, by the mockery and insult

sult they had experienced from the Ambassador's house, they should have followed still further the impulse of their resentment. Before the reinforcements of cavalry and grenadiers could arrive from the distant suburbs, the gate of the house where the Ambassador lodged was burst open; the windows and the kitchen furniture in the apartments on the ground floor were destroyed; two carriages were damaged and carried off: these however were afterwards secured by the guard. It was with extreme difficulty that the military was able to occupy the principal staircase, to prevent the people from forcing into the Ambassador's apartment, and to protect from danger as well his person as his suite; which was the more to be apprehended for them, as

several shots were fired by his suite upon the people, though happily without any effect.

At length, after two o'clock in the morning, tranquillity was again restored. For greater precaution, the entrances of the street which led to the Ambassador's house, remained the next day (the 14th) occupied by troops; the garrison continued under arms; and there immediately appeared a proclamation by the Minister of Police, in which, by order of His Majesty, in that paternal tone, with which this monarch constantly speaks to his subjects, he condemns that usurped authority, by which the people constituted themselves as judge; exhorted them to quietness, and declares that the authors of any new riot shall be given over to the punishment which the laws determine for every act of violence.

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The French Ambassador kept now no longer to any form, to any existing usage among nations. On the 14th April, in the morning, although the adjacent streets were still filled with people, whom curiosity had drawn thither, he sent one of his officers, without taking any previous measures for his safety, with a letter directly to the Emperor. In this letter he peremptorily insisted on receiving a passport to quit the country. It was answered in polite and obliging terms by Count Colledo, the Cabinet Minister. In the afternoon of the same day, Count Saurace and Baron Degelman were sent by His Imperial Majesty to discuss the business with the Ambassador, and to explain any misunderstanding that might have arisen. But, although the town had again enjoyed its usual tran-

quility, he persisted, with vehemence, in his determination to depart.

The passport which he demanded was then granted to him. Even a request which he brought forward, to have a messenger, whom he was about to dispatch, accompanied by an Imperial Officer, was also complied with. And he himself and his suite set out about noon on the 15th April, amidst a croud of quiet spectators, for Rastadt. He received at his departure all the military honours due to his rank, and, by his express desire, was escorted by a considerable body of horse.

It only now remains to subjoin some considerations on this remarkable occurrence in diplomatic history, of which the annals of Vienna, distinguished for the peaceable spirit

of its inhabitants, do not furnish another instance.

1. Was the French Ambassador ever justified in introducing at the Court, to which he was accredited, such innovations, as, according to the ideas there entertained, could only be looked upon as signals of discord and insurrection?

2. Was he justified in introducing any conspicuous, and, in its consequences, important innovation, without previous agreement with the Imperial Court, which had engaged with the French Republic, by the 23d art of the treaty of Campo Formio, that ceremony, rank, and etiquette in the intercourse between the two powers, should remain on the footing on which they were before the war? The former French Ambassadors were

never inclined to depart in the smallest degree from any of their rights; but they, on no occasion, displayed in Vienna even their Sovereign's arms. To hoist a flag, they would never have permitted themselves.

3. Did he Act prudently in permitting himself, such innovations, at the Court to which he was sent, as must excite against him the ill-will and distrust both of the Court itself, and of the whole nation?

4. If an Imperial Ambassador were to hoist an Imperial flag in Paris, would he experience from the French Government the same moderation—the same protection for his personal safety, which General Bernadotte received from the Austrian Government? Would the people of Paris have proceeded

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to no greater lengths in their violence, than the people of Vienna? Would not the Imperial Minister have in that case incurred the just resentment of his Court, for having purposely, or with levity, exposed himself to insult and abuse?

5. What view could the Ambassador have in hanging out a flag, which, according to our ideas, is a signal of alarm, since it is the practice to hoist it on steeples on the breaking out of fires? Even according to the ideas prevalent in France, the expression—*faire flotter le drapeau tricolor*—announces the expression of conquest, or the appropriation of territory: With what eyes then must such an act of temerity be looked upon here?

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6. For what purpose did General Bernadotte bring with him so many young men without experience and knowledge of the world? Of what service were several Aides-de-camp to be with him in a diplomatic mission, in which he had not a single soldier in command, nor a single military operation to direct.

7. Was it prudent in the Ambassador— Was it consistent with the natural object of a messenger of peace, to choose for his attendants a number of rash, unbred young men, who took pains, by the licentiousness and insolence of their conduct, to excite universal offence and resentment?

8. What could be General Bernadotte's plans, when he was making arrangements beforehand

forehand for quitting this capital, when, already, on the 13th of April (before he yet had drawn on himself the displeasure of the people of Vienna, by the hoisting of his flag) he was preparing for immediate departure?

9. Why did not General Bernadotte, if his views were innocent, apprize the Emperor's Ministry of his purpose—Why did he order the flag to be prepared in secret—and why did he wait to hoist it up for the period of twilight?

10. Why did General Bernadotte, instead of giving way to the universal displeasure, or demanding with discretion and propriety the assistance of the Government, seek to provoke the public against himself with menace and abuse? Why, instead of thanking
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the military for the protection they afforded him, did he send for the Colonel of the town guard, and the Chief Director of the Police, with the omission of the respect due to them?—Why did he hazard the rash experiment of firing, by his suite, upon the people? Let the whole world here be judge, and answer these questions.

The author of this narration is satisfied with having related the facts impartially, as they passed under his eyes, and as they are contained in an authentic and juridical statement to which he has had access.—He has only to lament, that the embassy of a nation, which has made the abolition of arms, and of all marks of distinction, one of its fundamental laws, should, by the hoisting of a
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variegated flag, have exposed to the evils of an insurrection the capital of a power, to which it had engaged its friendship, and thus wantonly subjected to danger the lives of a number of innocent individuals.



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